

Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder

**"2006 DoD Counternarcotics Budget: Does It Deliver the
Necessary Support?"**

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy
And Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform

May 10, 2005

Good afternoon; I want to thank you all for coming to this very important hearing that continues our series of hearings reviewing the President's National Drug Control Strategy and FY 2006 Budget proposal. Today we focus on the counterdrug responsibilities of the Department of Defense.

Due to the jurisdictional responsibility of the Subcommittee, we pay very close attention to drug supply and interdiction initiatives contained within the President's National Drug Control Strategy and Budget. Our oversight activities evaluate departmental authorizations, appropriations, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the departmental efforts. The President's budget request for 2006, now before Congress, asks for approximately \$12.5 billion dollars for counterdrug initiatives. The President's Drug Strategy has requested that nearly \$900 million be appropriated to the Department of Defense (DoD) through its Office of Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict.

This budget request does not include the wartime supplemental requests that will fund the war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2006. For FY 2005, the Department of Defense received an additional \$315 million in supplemental funds for counter-narcotics activities in Afghanistan. However, it is too early to speculate what additional counterdrug funding requests will be presented to Congress in FY 2006 for the Defense Department's commitments to support the war on drugs.

The Subcommittee remains committed to the efforts of the United States Governmental agencies that combat the devastating effects of illegal drug usage within this country. According to the Center for Disease Control's preliminary estimates for 2003, over 25,000 Americans died of drug-related causes. To put this in perspective, we have never lost this many Americans annually to a post -World War II military or terrorist campaign. This staggering statistic is significant when we consider that we have lost over 1,500 brave Americans in Iraq since Operation Iraqi Freedom began, accounting for less than 3 percent of those lost to drugs over the same period of time. We have lost more Americans to drugs than were killed in all terrorist acts to date. Therefore, it is vitally important that we maintain vigorous efforts to control the sources of supply for narcotics and to interdict them before reaching the United States.

The explosion of heroin production and trafficking in Afghanistan has caused some to believe that the Defense Department's counterdrug efforts in that country to have been too little and too late. As the President's Drug Strategy Report notes, "If all of Afghanistan's opium were converted to heroin, the

result would be 582 metric tons of heroin. By comparison, Colombia and Mexico combined produced roughly 22 metric tons of pure heroin in 2003, more than enough to satisfy U.S. consumption.”

The 2004 United Nations opium poppy survey reflected that Afghanistan produced over 80% of the world’s heroin. If the situation in Afghanistan is not reversed, the destabilizing effects of the drug trade there could reverse all of our gains in that country since 2001. It takes little imagination to understand that a thriving drug trade in Afghanistan is financing narco-terrorist forces, able to threaten the government in Afghanistan and threaten the region. Here in the target market for illegal drugs, we may also see a rise in the number of heroin-related deaths, and even more death among European nations.

What the subcommittee hopes to learn today, in order to reverse the deadly trends we are already seeing in Afghanistan, whether DoD needs to refocus its priorities on the destruction of stockpiled drugs and drug processing facilities, support aerial and ground eradication of opium, and interdict precursor chemicals necessary for drug production. These efforts are essential for Afghanistan to be firmly set on the road to democracy and away from corruption, tyranny, and terrorism.

While the Subcommittee believes that DoD has needed to step up its counterdrug efforts in Afghanistan, we have equally significant concerns about DoD’s continuing commitment to its responsibilities in the Western Hemisphere. In November 1989, Congress passed the DoD Authorization Act of 1990, in which Congress directed the Department of Defense to serve as the single lead federal agency for detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States, in **support** of the counterdrug activities of Federal, State, local and foreign law enforcement agencies. DoD accomplishes this task by providing airborne and ground based detection in areas of known drug smuggling activities.

However, DoD’s level of effort to fulfill this responsibility is evidenced by the sharp reduction in aerial support to the Source and Transit Zones. According to records maintained by Joint Interagency Task Force South, maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) hours have dropped drastically due to the U.S. Navy’s reduction of authorized P-3 flight hours in the Transit Zone. For example, Transit Zone naval marine patrol aircraft patrol hours decreased from 5,964 hours in 2002 to 4,634 hours in 2003 to only 1,741 hours in 2004, a drop of 71% in only two years.

In the Source Zone, the Navy’s signal-intelligence capable P-3’s provided only 403 hours in 2004 (a drop of 35% from 2001 levels) while the United States Air Force’s E-3 AWACS flew a total of 81 hours for all of calendar year 2004. If we were to rely just on the U.S. Navy and Air Force assets in the Source Zone, we would have had planes in the air for less than 9% of the time last year.

The continual degradation of the Tethered Aerostat Radar System (TARS) is a further example of concern with respect to DoD’s counterdrug commitment in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. Air Force, which took over control of TARS from the U.S. Customs Service in 1992, has reduced the number of TARS radar sites from 14 to 8. This has left the U.S. nearly blind to air and marine smuggling activities along the entire Gulf Coast (stretching from the east coast of Texas to the southern tip of Florida) and from the eastern coast of Florida to Puerto Rico. I personally inspected this dangerous lack of coverage in the Gulf of Mexico when we visited Custom and Border Protection’s Air and Marine Operations Center in March of this year. The lack of any radar feed for the entire Gulf area highlighted just how vulnerable we are to air and marine intruders transiting the region into the United States.

In 1989 when Congress authorized DoD to support Federal, State, local, and foreign law enforcement agencies, the Interagency counterdrug assets and programs were not yet capable of primary

detection and monitoring duties. However, the world has changed since then. The most obvious change happened in 2002 when Congress created the Department of Homeland Security. Within the Department of Homeland Security the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) houses the combined air and marine assets of the legacy Customs Service and the U.S. Border Patrol. Similarly, the U.S. Coast Guard has a full inventory of vessels and aircraft capable of armed take downs of vessels carrying contraband. Less obvious is the maturation of the counterdrug capabilities within the Department of Homeland Security. Even though the Department of Homeland Security operates aged aircraft and vessels, they account for the majority of the aerial and marine patrols responsible for the majority of the seizures in the Source and Transit Zones.

The Subcommittee recently was made aware of DoD-drafted amendments to the FY06 DoD authorization bill that were prepared for the White House Office of Management and Budget for that are very troubling. One amendment would effectively place DoD as the lead agency for detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs **outside** of the Western Hemisphere (we have already seen how DoD support in the Western Hemisphere has declined over time). A second amendment would allow “Funds available to the Department of Defense for drug interdiction and counter-drug activities may be used by the Secretary of Defense for detecting, monitoring, interdicting terrorists, and other related transnational threats.” This language would allow DoD to take funding Congress set aside for DoD’s counterdrug responsibilities and use those funds for missions that may be wholly unrelated to its counter-narcotics commitments.

The drug interdiction capabilities within the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice compels Congress to reevaluate the counterdrug roles and responsibilities of the U.S. governmental agencies. The fundamental questions the Subcommittee needs to ask this panel are:

- 1) Has the appropriated DoD counterdrug efforts yielded tangible results in our efforts to stop the increase of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan?
- 2) Have the current commitments of DoD to engage in two separate conflicts hampered their ability to support the nation’s counterdrug efforts in this hemisphere?
- 3) Do DoD counterdrug assets and capabilities provide services unique only to the military requiring larger operating costs?
- 4) Have we appropriately designed a Joint Interagency structure that promotes DoD supporting law enforcement efforts?
- 5) Is it still appropriate for DoD to be the lead federal agency for detection and monitoring of drug shipments in the transit zone – or should this responsibility and funding be instead transferred to the Department of Homeland Security.

Today we have a panel of very experienced witnesses to help answer these and other questions posed by the Subcommittee. From the Office of the Secretary of Defense we have the principal operator of DoD’s counterdrug budget, Ms. Marybeth Long, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (SOLIC). From Joint Task Force North, USNORTHCOM, we have the Director of Plans, Colonel John D. Nelson. From USCENTCOM, we have the Assistant Operations Officer, Captain Jim Stahlman. From USSOUTHCOM we have Deputy Director for Current Operations, Captain Ed Turner. From the Office of National Drug Control Policy we have Mr. Lennard Wolfson, Assistant Deputy Director of the Office of Supply Reduction. We look forward to your testimony and insight into this very important topic of DoD counterdrug support.